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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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PERSONNEL
Welfare

January 14, 1949

P.M. No. 49-12

Regional Foresters
and Directors

Dear Sir:

We are enclosing a copy of a digest, taken from the Military Review, of an article entitled "Morale" by General Sir William Slim which appeared in the Army Quarterly of Great Britain, April 1948.

There is an earthy, understandable approach in this article that we think you will find interesting and helpful.

We ask that it be called to the attention especially of your training officers. You may wish to distribute the text to part or all of your work supervisors.

We are planning to present excerpts from the attached in a forthcoming issue of the "Daily Digest," to reach most of our personnel.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. D. Cochran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

H. D. COCHRAN, Chief
Division of Personnel Management

Enclosure

Article taken from "Military Review", November, 1948

FOREIGN MILITARY DIGESTS

Morale

Digested by the MILITARY REVIEW from an article by
General Sir William Slim in "The Army Quarterly"
(Great Britain) April 1948.

Morale isn't a matter of the Fighting Services only. True, an army without morale is nothing but a collection of unhappy, frightened men, but a nation without morale is just a collection of quarrelling discontented sects and parties, with no unity and no real aim. Morale is the most important thing in any organization. It's the most important thing in this country now.

Feeling like that, when I got command of the Fourteenth Army I sat quietly down by myself to think out this business of morale. My thoughts ran something like this.

Three Factors

Morale is the intangible spirit of any body of men or women. Like courage, it's a state of mind, a mixture of emotion and reason. High morale means that every individual in a group will work - or fight - and, if needed, will give his last ounce of effort in its service. Now for a man, especially an intelligent man, to feel and act like that, his morale must have certain foundations - certain things on which it is solidly and firmly based. These foundations are, I think, first, spiritual, then mental, and lastly material. I put them in that order because that, I believe, is the order of their importance.

Spiritual first, because no other foundation of conduct will stand firm under real strain. I use the word "spiritual" not necessarily in the meaning of religious belief - though religion is and always has been one of the greatest foundations of morale - but in the sense of faith in a cause.

A man must believe that what his organization is working for is worthy of all the labor and sacrifice he may be called upon to give - that it has a great and vitally necessary object, a noble object if you like. Next, he must feel intensely that he is part, even if only a small part of that organization, and that what he is and what he does really counts in it.

So much for the broad spiritual foundation of morale. What of the mental ones? First, I think, the intelligent man must be convinced that the object of the organization is really attainable. Second, he must feel that he belongs to an efficient show, one in which his efforts - perhaps his life - are not likely to be wasted. As the third mental foundation, he should, whenever possible, know why he is asked to do certain things.

That brings me to the material foundations. I have put these last, because you can have good morale - in fact, the highest type of morale - amid the

(over)

worst material conditions. But any leader would be very unwise to expect it, and he certainly wouldn't get it unless his men knew that he was doing everything he possibly could to improve those conditions. That, in fact, is the material foundation of morale - not that conditions are perfect or even good, but that the need for improvement is recognized and that improvements are being made at the best rate they can be.

It was on these foundations, spiritual, mental and material, that we began to build up morale.

Now I know, very well, that lots of things can be done in the Army that can't be done in civil life. But after all my gunner in his green battle-dress is now in dungarees in some factory, field, mine, shop or office somewhere in Britain. He's still the same chap, and we would still respond to the same appeals if they could be seen to apply equally to the job he's doing now.

Is there any reason why they shouldn't? Take the spiritual foundations that we worked on. We've got these in Britain now as we've never had them before. We none of us doubted, nor do we doubt now, that this old country of ours and all she means in tolerance and freedom for us and for the world was worth fighting for. And if all that was worth fighting for then, it's worth working for now. The object - the survival of our way of life - is the same; any man or woman in this country who does an honest day's work should feel a part, and a very real part, of the greatest team of all - the British people.

But it's not enough to have a worthy object; you've got to convince everyone in the party that it is a worthy object. What might have seemed obvious to me, sitting in Army Headquarters surrounded by maps, reports and returns, might not be so self-evident to the orderly at my door who hadn't seen his wife for four years, or to the wet, hungry soldier up there in the jungle who was being shot at. It may not be so plain to a lot of people now.

Personal Contact

We found that the best way to convince men that what they were doing was worth while was to tell them yourself. The spoken word, delivered in person is the greatest instrument. An occasional talk by the man who holds the responsibility for the show counts a lot. It doesn't need an orator. Any man who holds control over others should be able to do it, provided he has two qualifications. First, that he's clear in his own mind about what he wants to put over, and secondly that he believes it himself. That last is important.

Such talks shouldn't be high-souled expositions of lofty aims. You've got to come down out of the clouds and talk about the things that occupy men's minds - pay, housing, working conditions, prospects - but at the end, whatever the audience, give a final word on a higher plane, on the spiritual foundations.

People will always respond - sometimes a shade disconcertingly. Once when I had talked to a battalion about a coming offensive, a little Cockney

sergeant jumped up and said: "When the day comes, we'll all be behind you!" I felt compelled in honesty to reply: "Don't you believe it, sergeant. When the day comes, you'll be quite a long way in front of me!"

It's easy to get unity and enthusiasm at the top. We used to do that by conferences of senior staff officers, when all present could feel themselves - and what was more important see themselves - as a team. The real task is to get that feeling down to those with the duller, less well-paid jobs. We did that in the Army largely by unit information rooms, where any soldier could find out what was going on, not only on his own little front but on others, and by talks from commanding officers. We took some risks with security, but those were more than compensated by the gain in morale from every man feeling he was in the know.

Then, too, in any big organization there are bound to be large sections not in the limelight. Until something goes wrong no one remembers them. It's a very good thing for the man in charge sometimes to visit these sections and let them know from the boss himself that they too are parts, and essential parts, of the machine.

Attainable Objective

Now for the mental foundation of morale - that the object must be attainable, that the organization is efficient and that a man knows why he's asked to do things.

Our over-all object is the restoration of the prosperity of this country. If you examine the shortages and difficulties which so hamper us in achieving it you'll be surprised to find how many of them are really only marginal - another 5 per cent here, another 10 per cent in output there. Such efforts are within our capacity. We have the industrial skill, the scientific knowledge, the resources and the character. Of course we can do it. Our object is achievable.

The way to convince a man he belongs to an efficient show is first of all to have an efficient show - an organization where the job gets done without fuss, people aren't kept hanging about and there's a steady rhythm of work. Remember, too, that often, especially for a headquarters, it's not enough to be efficient. You've got to look efficient.

In any sort of society and in any organization somebody's got to give the orders. It is no use being startled at that, and it's no use treating an order merely as a basis for discussion. Orders have to be carried out. But wherever it's possible, it's a very good thing to explain why an order is given, why things are done in a certain way, what the article being made is used for.

Material Factors

That brings me to the material foundations of morale - where the man lives, the conditions under which he works, the tools he uses and what he gets for his labor. We are rightly increasingly concerned with these things, yet more dissatisfaction arises basically through neglect of the spiritual and

intellectual foundations than in failure of the material. Often the material hardship is the irritant that inflames a deeper discontent. The specified grievance, although it may be justified, is not the real cause of the trouble. It is not that conditions are bad that upsets men so much as delay or failure to recognize that they are, and to take steps to improve them. For example, few things are more discouraging than to ask men to work with obsolete or worn-out equipment - yet if it can be shown that there is a good reason why it can't be replaced at the moment and that at the same time everyone above them is going all out to get the better tools, men will come to take a fierce pride in overcoming their difficulties.

Well, those were the foundations on which we built morale. I think they apply equally in peace or war, to soldiers or to housewives. I believe that any organization, by basing its efforts on those same foundations - spiritual, intellectual and material - can get the same results, and make itself a united, efficient and effective team. And morale means more in an organization than success. It means that those who belong to it will be happy in their work - and that's a big step towards being happy in life.

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